

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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P R 231647Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 133
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AMEMBASSY BON
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
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LONDON PLEASE PASS AMBASSADOR MCCLOSKEY

USNMR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652C NA
TAGS: PGOV PINT NL
SUBJECT: THE DUTCH CABINET CRISIS: HOW IT AROSE

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REF: THE HAGUE 1492

1. THE STORY OF THE RISE AND FALL OF DUTCH PRIME MINISTER DEN
UYL BEGAN IN 1973 WHEN, AFTER 164 DAYS OF BEHIND THE SCENES
NEGOTIATION, THE SOCIALIST, THE NETHERLANDS LARGEST POLITICAL
PARTY, ENTERED A GOVERNMENT COMPOSED OF TEN PROGRESSIVE AND
SIX CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC MINISTERS SUPPORTED BY A MAJORITY

COALITION IN PARLIAMENT. IN KEEPING WITH DUTCH POLITICAL TRADITION, THE FORMATION WAS BASED ON A CAREFULLY NEGOTIATED PACKAGE OF PROGRAMS AND PROPOSALS WHICH THE CABINET WAS COMMITTED TO PURSUE.

2. THE SOCIALIST (PVDA) PARTY, WHICH HAD BROUGHT THE 1972 ELECTIONS ON A PLATFORM OF GREATER SOCIAL EQUALITY AND WITH THE PROMISE OF A SERIOUS EFFORT TOWARD MORE EQUITABLE SHARING OF INCOME, WEALTH, KNOWLEDGE AND POWER, IMPARTED CONSIDERABLE DUTCH SOCIALIST DOCTRINE TO THE PLATFORM OF THE DEN UYL CABINET. MANY OF THE IMPORTANT STRANDS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY RESEMBLED THOSE FAMILIAR TO WATCHERS OF THE SWEDISH EXPERIMENT, THOUGH ON THE WHOLE THEY WERE MORE MODERATE.

3. LARGELY AS THE RESULT OF THE ALMOST REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES OF THE 60'S (76 THE HAGUE 1161), DECISION MAKING BY THE NETHERLANDS GOVERNMENT DEPENDS UPON THE INVOLVEMENT OF A COMPLEX ARRAY OF DIVERSE INTEREST GROUPS BESIDES ESTABLISHED POLITICAL PARTIES. DEN UYL AND HIS CABINET SOON FOUND THAT PUTTING THEIR PROGRAM INTO EFFECT REQUIRED A VAST AMOUNT OF DISCUSSION AS WELL AS MUCH FORBEARANCE IN THE PROCESS OF ADJUSTING CONFLICTING VIEWS. OVER TIME DEN UYL REVEALED HIMSELF AS A MASTER OF COMPROMISE. INCLUDED IN HIS CONSIDERABLE ARMORY OF POLITICAL DEVICES, AS HE PRESSED FOR THE ADOPTION OF HIS PROGRAM, WAS THE INSTRUMENT OF POSTPONEMENT. EXTENSIVE USE OF THIS TACTIC RESULTED IN DEN UYL'S PROGRAM TAKING CONSIDERABLY MORE TIME TO PUT INTO EFFECT THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN ANTICIPATED AT THE OUTSET. THUS, A NUMBER OF DIFFICULT AND POLITICALLY EXPLOSIVE PIECES OF SOCIAL LEGISLATION REMAINED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO BE DEALT WITH AT THE END.

4. MEANWHILE, THE THREE HISTORIC CHRISTIAN PARTIES HAD EMERGED FROM THE 1972 ELECTION BADLY BRUISED. THE CATHOLIC PARTY (KVP), WHICH A DECADE EARLIER HAD 50 SEATS, WENT DOWN TO ONLY 27. THE MORE RIGHT-WING CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL UNION (CHU) DROPPED FROM 10 SEATS IN 1971 TO 7. ONLY THE MORE PROGRESSIVE ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (ARP) GAINED, GOING FROM 13 TO 14 SEATS. PROFUNDLY INFLUENCED BY THE POST-WAR WAVE OF ECUMENISM WHICH HAS SWEEPED THE NETHERLANDS AND SPURRED BY THE PROSPECT OF FURTHER LOSSES DUE TO DECONFESSIONALIZATION, THE THREE PARTIES FOUND THEMSELVES IN THE SAME DEFENSIVE CORNER. IN 1976 THEY HALTINGLY OVERCAME THEIR HISTORIC INHIBITIONS AND JOINED INTO A COMMON CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC APPEAL (CDA) WHICH WILL CONTEST THE UPCOMING MAY 25 ELECTIONS WITH ONE SLATE (76 THE HAGUE 5614).

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5. THE CDA CHOSE JUSTICE MINISTER VAN AGT AS ITS LEADING
ELECTORAL CANDIDATE, THUS PUTTING VAN AGT, WHO IS ALSO DEPUTY
PRIME MINISTER, IN THE PARADOXICAL POSITION OF BEING BOTH THE
NUMBER TWO IN THE DEN UYL CABINET AND AT THE SAME TIME DEN UYL'S
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PRINCIPAL POLITICAL OPPONENT. ALSO, THE CDA SOON DISCOVERED
THAT THE MERE JOINING TOGETHER HAD NOT REMOVED SUBSTANTIAL

DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH WITHIN THE PARTY. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO THE SEARCH FOR THE BEST POSSIBLE POSTURE FOR THE MAY 1977 ELECTIONS ALSO COMPLICATED THE POLITICAL PICTURE. FOR THE PAST HALF YEAR, THEREFORE, THE ISSUE INCREASINGLY BECAME THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CDA FELT IT COULD SUPPORT THE SOCIALISTS IN MOVING TOWARD ADOPTION OF THE BAYIC PROGRAM OF THE DEN UYL CABINET. AS ELECTION DAY NEARED AND THE SOCIALISTS PUSHED HARDER AND HARDER FOR ADOPTION OF LONG-DELAYED PROGRAMS, THE CDA DUG IN.

6. ALTHOUGH PUSHING THE CDA HARD, THE SOCIALISTS WERE CLEARLY ANXIOUS TO HAVE DEN UYL COMPLETE HIS TERM. THEY WERE HOPING FOR FURTHER ELECTORAL GAINS AND WERE AIMING FOR ANOTHER LEFT/CENTER COALITION WITH DEN UYL AS PRIME MINISTER "TO COMPLETE THE JOB." STRONG AND PERHAPS PREPONDERANT ELEMENTS IN THE CDA, INCLUDING MOST ARP AND A LARGE NUMBER OF KVP SUPPORTERS, ALSO ENVISIONED A CONTINUATION OF THE COALITION. OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE KVP AS WELL AS IN THE CHU PREFERRED TO THINK OF A POTENTIAL CENTER/RIGHT COALITION WITH THE LIBERALS, THOUGH REALIZING THAT SUCH A COALITION WOULD DEPEND HEAVILY ON COMMAND OF A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY AFTER THE 1977 ELECTIONS.

7. THESE STRESSES AND STRAINS NOTWITHSTANDING, NOTHING NEED HAVE HAPPENED. WHAT TRIGGERED THE FALL OF DEN UYL WAS THE EXTRAORDINARY BEHAVIOR OF VAN AGT. THE JUSTICE MINISTER, WHO HAD ALREADY ASTOUNDED DUTCH POLITICAL OBSERVERS AS WELL AS THE PUBLIC WITH HIGHLY UNORTHODOX POLITICAL BEHAVIOR BASED, SO IT SEEMED, EXCLUSIVELY ON THE VOICE OF HIS CONSCIENCE, IN THE ABORTION AND MENTEN AFFAIRS (76 THE HAGUE 6892 AND 7077), ONCE AGAIN SURPRISED THE HAGUE WITH UNPREDICTABLE AND ERRATIC ZIGGING AND ZAGGING. HE SIGNED THE DRAFT BILL ON LAND POLICY BUT THEN ARGUED AGAINST IT IN THE CABINET. LAST SATURDAY, AS A COMPROMISE SEEMED NEAR, HE LASHED OUT ON THE RADIO AT SOME OF HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES, SOME OF WHOM RESPONDED IN KIND.

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ON MONDAY HE AND ONE OF THE KVP MINISTERS WERE OUTVOTED BY THE REST OF THE CABINET. THEN HE DECIDED TO RESIGN. DESPITE DEEP MISGIVINGS, THE OTHER CDA MINISTERS, IN A SPASM OF UNITY, FOLLOWED SUIT.

7. ON THIS GRAY AND FOGGY MORNING AFTER THE NIGHT BEFORE, THERE ARE NO CRYSTAL BALLS. INDICATIONS AT PRESENT ARE THAT THE SOCIALISTS WOULD PREFER A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT, WHICH WOULD CONTINUE ALL MINISTERS IN OFFICE UNTIL A NEW CABINET EMERGES FROM THE MAY ELECTIONS. PRESUMABLY THEY BELIEVE THIS WILL KEEP DEN UYL IN THE PUBLIC VIEW AS THE ONLY LEADER CAPABLE OF SUCCEEDING HIMSELF. THE CDA ALSO SEEMS TO FAVOR THIS SOLUTION, PROBABLY MOTIVATED BY THE STILL DOMINANT SENTIMENT IN ITS RANKS IN FAVOR OF CONTINUING TO WORK WITH SOCIALISTS AFTER MAY, ALBEIT ON A

NEW PROGRAM TAILORED MORE TO THEIR MORE CONSERVATIVE APPROACH
TO SOCIAL REFORM. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE QUEEN WILL ASK DEN
UYL TO STAY ON IN A CARETAKER ROLE TOGETHER WITH THE REST OF
THE CABINET. SINCE ELECTIONS ARE NOT UNTIL MAY AND IT MAY
TAKE MONTHS TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT, THE CURRENT TEAM OF
MINISTERS IS LIKELY, DESPITE THEIR RESIGNATION, TO BE AROUND
FOR A WHILE YET.
BROWN

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